1: Hocart Y-5 (ca. 1920) 1929 OQ6 Lau OQ6
Lakemba



The first child, boy or girl, of the High Chief is treated with state. 851
Women come from Tumbou, Levuka, the country, to hold it by turns in 644
their arms, not allowing it to touch the ground for ten days. They may not sleep in the house where the child is, they may not wash. The chief pays them with feasts and gifts. Leading noblemen come in. Every day a feast is made. On the tenth day the child's grandmothers, who have stayed in the house, go to bathe in the sea, which they do by going to fish. The child is bathed in a bowl or a bucket of fresh water, but they call it bathing in the sea.[20] A feast is made for its bathing.

## SICKNESS AND MEDICINE

### The Cure, the Diagnosis

Prevention of disease is almost unknown in Lau and it is difficult to 751
make the natives take precautions against infection. It is known that 758
some diseases spread (*ndewa*), but the persons infected are not avoided. Lepers are isolated by law, but are visited by their relatives and friends. In fact, one wise woman thinks that there is more leprosy now because lepers are isolated. Epidemics are called *mate taka*.

Sick persons are much downcast and lie helpless with a blanket over 758
their faces, hardly answering when spoken to. Even taking into consideration that the commonest illnesses are fevers, which have depressing effect, Lauans do not stand up to illness. They also appear to judge a disease by its feeling. As soon as the depressing effect is over, the patient throws off his blanket, sits up, and goes about before he has recovered, hence attacks of fever last longer than necessary.

If a man is ill away from home, his people immediately take him home. The kinsfolk visit the patient. They sit and talk together, and at night have kava, often until late. If the patient be better, he sits up to receive the visitors.

The great number of names of diseases at first sight suggests a precise 753
and highly developed diagnosis. For instance, some of the diseases of the abdomen are called: *rambcrambe tu i kete, wanggangga i kete, ngata lua, oso, mbcra a mbcte, mbati yate, mbondra;* some kinds of "octopus." But an informant explains:

> They are all in the belly, but the names differ; it all depends on what is good 753
> for them (*kena yanga*); if a man is ill in the belly, they send for all those who know 757
> the names of diseases; they try one, then another; they come and touch (*vamotha*) the 755
> patient. If they touch the patient and he gets relief, they bring some medicine. It is our hand that is effective."

[20] Wailevu means great water. In Lau it is the sea, but in Viti Levu it refers to a river. The migration of the custom may explain the anomaly.

2: Thompson E-5 (1933-1934)1940 OQ6 Lau OQ6
Kambara



Concerning food gathering in the past, Moto, an old man of the Matasoata clan in Undu, gave the following information: 222

When I was a boy we always gathered our food. Men, women, and children gathered fruits and nuts, and the women and children gathered leaves. Our everyday food was the *wangiri* nut. It grows on a vine in the bush. The black, shelled nuts were roasted and eaten right in the bush. If we had some nuts left after satisfying our appetites, we took them home in a basket of coconut leaves and sank the basket into salt water to make fermented food (*mandrai*), as we do now with manioc or breadfruit. [415] [252]

When I was a boy about the size of Nggauna [who was fifteen] we had no real garden land on Kambara. Where the gardens are on Ndelaioloi near Tokalau, trees were growing, mainly the Tahitian chestnut and the *ndawa*. We had no manioc except *manioka ni India*, which was poisonous, and the poison had to be extracted before it could be eaten. We had the white and red sweet potato; the brownish ones came later. When I was a boy we did not have as many sweet potatoes as we have today. We planted very small patches only, usually among the trees where the bush did not grow too thickly. Gradually the fruit trees on Ndelaioloi died away and the land was used for gardens. We had no real yams, only the sweet yam (*kawai*) and the *kaile* and a very few wild yam (*tchivoli*). We planted wild yam and *kaile* only in the bush where we found them growing wild. We did not need to search for wild yam because we knew where they grew and also knew to whom they belonged. Sometimes we planted from three to four sweet yam plants together. We dug no real holes and never made mounds as we do today.

## Fishing

The waters surrounding the islands of Lau are rich in fish. On clear days, as one passes by canoe over the colorful lagoons, large schools can be seen moving over the white bottom and slowly drawing around the coral limestone formations, which stretch under the water like colored hills and valleys. 226 [136]

Fishing techniques differ on the various islands, due to the character of the coast, the lagoon, and the reef; to the depth and clearness of water; to the currents; and to the kind of fish prevalent in the vicinity.

Women catch most of the daily supply of fish in nets. Only when fishing becomes a sport, as in spearing, or when it is connected with a ceremony, as in communal fishing, do men participate. The master fisherman has charge of communal fishing and the fishing grounds (p. 51). There is less organized fishing today than there was in the past. Usually fishing is done by small groups, who disturb the fish so that actually fewer and smaller ones are now caught. The master fisherman of Kambara says that if the people do not ask permission before they go fishing they do not make a good catch.

### Fishing with Nets

**Tatanga.** The *tatanga* is a rectangular net not quite one fathom wide and about one fathom long. It is spread out by two sticks, 3 to 4 cm. in diameter, one attached to each short side of the net. Three to six women blacken their faces with ashes, especially the region around the eyes, as a protection from sun. Each woman takes a *tatanga* net, rolls it around two sticks, and carries it on her shoulder or in her hand. On Kambara the women use diving goggles, called *suvimarini* (submarine), which are said to have been introduced about ten years ago. The nets are unfolded on the beach. Women prefer [302] [751]

2: Thompson E-5 (1933-1934)1940 OQ6 Lau OQ6
Kambara



Hocart's statement (15, p. 126) that there is no spitting at the *kanusivi vale* ceremony does not hold for southern Lau. 342

The spitting ceremony marks the strict division of the interior of the house into three sections (p. 64), but, inasmuch as the house has been built by the communal labor of the whole village, the villagers have the privilege of entering the main doorway and sitting down in the lower part of the house at any time.

**House Protection.** Long poles and fish spears are usually kept leaning against the roof to hold down the thatch. On houses exposed to strong wind, coconut leaves are tied together in pairs by the upper ends and hung as roof weights, astride the ridgepole, to prevent the wind from lifting the thatch or carrying away the roof. The natives say that during hurricanes they crowd together in small low houses and hold down the roof with their hands. [731]

Occasionally dwelling houses are protected from evil spirits by magic prophylactics. They are usually directed against particular spirits. For example, the owner of the house in which I lived in Tokalau had planted a clump of giant taro (*via*) beside the steps leading to the main entrance to protect the inhabitants from Tutumatua (23, p. 127), an evil spirit, who had caused the owner's wife to become ill. If Tutumatua, who had elephantiasis of the leg, attempted to visit the house again, he would see the giant taro plant with its swollen, knobbed roots, and, ashamed of the resemblance of the roots to his leg, would leave immediately. A branch of *uthi* leaves is occasionally hung inside a house to protect it from evil spirits. 342 751

## House furnishings

Shutters (*i songo*) are attached to the doorways of a house and used as a protection against wind and rain. There are two main types of shutters: *i songo mbekambeka*, made of *mbekambeka* mats (p. 203) hung on hinges of pandanus to one side of the doorway; and *i songo tambakau*, made of *tambakau* mats (p. 203) sewn together with pandanus, hung above the door, rolled, and tied with sennit. Wooden doors (*i songo papa*) hung on metal hinges to a wooden door frame are seen occasionally in modern houses. Formerly a hearth (*matandravu*), used for cooking and lighting, was set off by blocks of wood in the lower part of the house to the left of the main entrance. Hearths are still found in a few small dwelling houses on Fulanga. The smoke rises through the thatch or the doorways and protects the house from mosquitoes. When mosquitoes are particularly prevalent, green leaves are burned in fires built on the foundation mound outside the doorway to windward. 342 354

For light, wood from the *sevua* (*Vavaea vitiensis*) tree is burned in the fireplace. Besides firelight, oil lamps (*thina*) are used. The lamp consists of a scraped half coconut shell, in which a wick made of the midrib of a single coconut leaflet (*sasa*) wrapped in barkcloth is placed upright either by stick- [824] 373

2: Thompson E-5 (1933-1934)1940 OQ6 Lau OQ6
Kambara



## ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

The southern Lau islands offer a rich and virgin field to the archaeologist. Overgrown by jungle and ravaged by weather, most of the archaeological sites are avoided by the natives. If one finds it necessary to approach or pass a site he stops singing and joking, removes his turban and face paint (worn as protection against the sun), and frequently says a prayer. The bones of ancestors are tabu and may not be touched.

A few sites, mainly on Kambara and Wangava, were examined in order to check the historical data, but no attempt was made to study the archaeology systematically, to clear land, to excavate, or to remove skeletal material. The following brief notes, which indicate the types of sites found on the islands, may throw light on the culture history of the islands.

### FORTRESSES

Fortress (*koro*) sites, situated on strategic high points, are found on every island which is or has been habitually inhabited. They were formerly occupied by the inhabitants of neighboring hamlets in times of war. On the limestone islands they were protected, as at Naisevou on Kambara, by a series of undressed limestone walls (*mba vatu*) designed to reinforce and supplement the natural advantages afforded by cliffs or caves. On the volcanic islands they were fortified, like Ndelaimakotu on Mothe, by means of a series of earth ramparts surmounted in times of war by wooden fences. Each had house sites, a cemetery, and a ceremonial ground in the walled area. The names and locations of the fortress sites connected with each local group have been noted (pp. 22-26). A description of several fortresses located on limestone islands follows. No fortress sites on volcanic islands were studied.

#### NAISEVOU

An example of an unusually strong type of fortress is Naisevou (fig. 21) on Kambara. According to tradition it was built by Ndaunisai (table 2) and was never defeated in warfare. Naisevou and Korombalavu on Wangava (p. 220) are reputed to be the only fortresses that were not destroyed by fire in olden days. The site is located on a level ledge (about 197 by 60 meters) in the limestone cliffs about 38 to 41 meters above Tokalau village, and 28 meters below Nakorovusa, another fortress site on the edge of the ridge. The site commands an unobstructed view of the ocean and the Tokalau passage. Except for a garden clearing at the southwest end, the site is overgrown with bush and fruit trees, especially coconut trees. The fortress consisted of an inner village on high ground, protected by walls on the northeast and the southwest (fig. 21, 2), and two outer fortified areas on lower ground, pro-

3: Thompson E-5 (1933-1934) 1940 OQ6 Lau OQ6
Kambara



755 him food such as pork and sweet pudding which he ate. He
753 was treated according to the method described above and the spirits were discovered in his eyes. They flew away and he recovered.

[776] Women are usually possessed by an evil spirit called Tutumatua. He is really an old man with elephantiasis of the leg, but frequently he assumes the form of an attractive young man in order to win a woman he desires.

[824] A giant taro plant (called *via,* probably *Alocasia indica*) grew just outside the door of my house in Tokalau. The
● [751] natives said that this had been planted to keep out Tutumatua, who had been troubling the young woman formerly living in the house. When Tutumatua, bent on mischief, would start to enter the house, the giant knobby tuber would remind him of his hideous swollen leg and he would be so ashamed that he would pass by. I can vouch for the effectiveness of this measure, at least during the length of my occupancy.[58]

753 The missionary, Williams, recounts a similar case of spirit possession. He writes: "A heathen woman complained of being subject to the solicitations of some god, who was always standing near to entice her to him. Her husband appealed to me to drive away the god or his wife's delusion. The Rev. John Hunt was staying with me at the time and we went together to the dwelling of the woman, he armed with a large dose of Epsom salts, and I with a bottle of spirits of hartshorn. On our arrival we found the house filled with people, and the woman on her back in the midst, shouting lustily, 'Let me alone, that I may return!' The excitement was very great, but the shouting was considerably checked by the sudden application of hartshorn to her nose. When a light was brought we discovered that our patient was by no means a Venus, which led Mr. Hunt to observe, with dry gravity, 'Truly she is a beauty: what a fancy the god must have who can desire

[171] [58] Both Tutumatua and the "windwomen" are found under various names widespread in Polynesia and other parts of the Pacific.